



March 3, 2016

Senate Committee on Government Operations
Jeanette White, Chair
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier VT 05633-5301

Dear Senator White and Committee Members:

I support the proposed S.217 revisions agreed upon by the **Office of Professional Regulation (OPR)** and the **Vermont-National Education Association (VT-NEA)**.

When SLPs were licensed by the **Agency of Education (AOE)** they only had *one single license* and *one single fee*. Since the move to **OPR**, **AOE** has now informed us that school-based speech language pathologists (SLPs) will be required to obtain a *second* license and pay a *second* fee. Not only is this not good governing, but it is onerous and expensive for school-based SLPs.

Licensure is, first and foremost, a mechanism to ensure public safety and competency in the profession. The proposed amendments to S.217 will serve to strengthen the licensure process. School-based SLPs will continue to be subject to the standards and endorsement set forth by the **Standards Board**, with the input and expertise of **OPR**. The proposed amendments will accomplish several important objectives, including:

- Consolidating the licensure application and fee assessment under a single subdivision of State government, the **Office of Professional Regulation**.
 - This eliminates the need to for school-based SLPs to file redundant documentation and duplication of fees.
- Clearly defining school-based SLPs as “teachers”
 - This enables SLPs to continue to maintain the related status and benefits conferred by school districts and the teachers’ union.
- Maintaining an educational endorsement for school-based SLPs
 - This will be developed jointly by the **Office of Professional Regulation** and the **Standards Board**.
- Outlining specific information sharing expectations between the **Office of Professional Regulation** and the **Agency of Education** in the areas of workforce-data and discipline reporting.
 - This ensures collaboration between the two state agencies

SLPs have always had one single license and one fee, regardless of whether the SLP worked in a school or in any other setting. It only makes sense that this practice continue, especially given that there have been no changes to the profession that would warrant dual licensure. The proposed amendments streamline the governmental oversight and, more importantly, best serve and protect the public.

Sincerely,

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